

ZONES OF THEORY IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE ARAB WORLD

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INTRODUCTION

In 1987 I brought a copy of my newly published ethnography to the family that had hosted me during my fieldwork, from 1978 to 1980, in an Egyptian Bedouin community. No one in the community knew English, not many were literate even in Arabic. Yet it was important to me to offer them the book. They enjoyed the photographs, which I had carefully selected with an eye to the way people in the community would "read" them, making certain that at least one member from each of the families I knew was included. We discussed the book and its purpose. My host thought it a pity I had published it in English since his interest was in persuading non-Bedouin Egyptians of the validity of his way of life. He wanted to know who in America was interested—who would read it? Not many people in America were interested, I said, but I hoped it would be read by people who wanted to understand the Arabs—mostly students and scholars who specialized in understanding the different ways human beings around the world live.

This description of anthropology's avowed purpose sounded odd in that context. "Yes," my host remarked, "knowledge is power (*l-mi'rifa guwwa*). The Americans and the British know everything. They want to know everything about people, about us. Then if they come to a country, or come to rule it, they know what people need and they know how to rule." I laughed. "Exactly!" I said, and told him that a well-known book written by a Palestinian professor in America had said just that. My Bedouin host had brought up an issue about the politics of scholarship that we as Western-oriented scholars

have only recently begun to explore seriously. In *Middle East Studies*, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), following several earlier critiques (1, 21, 115), opened up this domain of questioning, and it is with this issue that any discussion of anthropological theories about the Arab world must begin.

What follows is not a comprehensive catalogue of the literature in Middle East anthropology but a tracing of the shapes and patterns of anthropological discourse on the Arab world. I focus on theory and confine my discussion mostly to anthropological works published in or translated into English in the past decade. I am concerned with the relationship of the anthropology of the Arab world to two somewhat distinct enterprises: the study of the region and anthropological theory more generally. Other important reviews (70, 99) present more detail and different perspectives, in Gilsenan's case a British one with more wit and historical depth.

I begin with a consideration of those anthropologists whose work, although based on fieldwork in some part of the Arab world, has been primarily directed toward and taken up by anthropologists outside the circle of Middle East specialists. Their contributions to anthropological theory have been in two related areas: epistemology and the analysis of culture or ideology. In the second half of the essay I turn to anthropological works that, while taking up or speaking to theoretical concerns, locate themselves more squarely within the study of the Arab Middle East. I show that the zones of anthropological theorizing about the Arab world are few and begin to ask the questions raised by this observation: Why is theorizing distributed into these particular zones? Why do the zones have these particular boundaries? What fashions and forces channel this distribution? What limits, exclusions, and silences does this distribution entail?

Through this critical reflection on my work and the work of my colleagues, I hope to illuminate the ways in which our scholarship is part of a complex world, not just about (and outside) it. Like all reviews, this one is partial. I have had to be selective and have been unable to do justice to the subtlety or range of argument and ethnography in many of the exemplary works I do cite. This review is also situated—a reading and writing from a particular place, from an individual who is personally, intellectually, politically, and historically situated. I hope to make clear that it could not be otherwise.

Orientalism and Anthropology

Anthropologists do not usually consider themselves Orientalists (and have often been looked down upon by traditional Orientalists) because their training within the discipline of anthropology has been stronger than their training in the languages, literatures, and history of the Middle East. Yet they fall within Said's definition of an Orientalist as "anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient" (1978: 2). Said, however, means something

both more specific and more general than this simple definition suggests. He defines Orientalism as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident,' " and also argues that Orientalism is "a corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it" (169 2–3). This Foucauldian approach to Orientalism as a "discursive formation" enables Said to analyze a whole group of texts constituting a field of study for themes, correspondences, affiliations, and silences, and to show how these texts interpenetrate the political and economic project of colonizing "the East."

Is anthropology, where Said's formulations are often considered problematic (e.g. 44), implicated? The totalizing opposition between East and West does not have particular currency in anthropology, where other dichotomies such as primitive/modern, black/white, savage/civilized, and now self/other are more salient. Some even argue that complex literate societies like those found in the Middle East or the Indian subcontinent do not fit easily within these dichotomies and have, for that reason, been second-class citizens when it comes to anthropological theorizing (cf. 18). For Said one of the most striking characteristics of Orientalism is its textuality, especially the way the truths about a "real place" called the Orient are created out of texts that seem to refer only to other texts for their authority. This is what he calls the citationary nature of Orientalism. Here, too, anthropologists would seem at first to be reasonably innocent, since they pride themselves on working in communities no one else has visited and tend to gather their material from "the field," not the library. As recent critics of ethnographies-as-texts have noted, they are supposed to acquire *their* authority from such devices as quoting from fieldnotes and telling stories that testify to their presence at the scenes of action, their "direct experience" (45, 126, 127).

However, insofar as the Middle East colonialism analyzed by Said is only one instance of Europe's domination of the rest of the world, critiques of anthropology's links to colonialism might be expected to follow lines similar to Said's. There is a growing literature on this subject within anthropology, most of it going well beyond the simplistic and conspiratorial handmaiden-of-colonialism arguments such as those that accuse anthropology of being a justification for colonial rule. Arguments like these are easily rebutted with accounts of the ways particular anthropologists opposed colonial officials or tried to help 'natives' or defenses that anthropologists are liberals who, like Franz Boas, were in the vanguard of the battle against ethnocentrism and racism.

What Said and the more sophisticated of the critics of anthropology's relationship to colonialism (20, 23, 46, 77, 125, 172) are trying to get at is

something far more subtle and pervasive, what Said calls "a *distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts*" (169 12) This may work through individuals, as Said suggests in a passage noting the obvious point that

if it is true that no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author's involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances, then it must also be true that for a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* actuality that he comes up against the Orient as a European or an American first, as an individual second And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer (169 11)

The fundamental structural inequality between the worlds of Western scholars and their Third World subjects affects in complex and indirect ways the disciplines within which such individuals work Questions like who is writing about whom, whose terms define the discourse, and even, as Asad (23) argues, who translates whose concepts and whose language bends to the other, need to be explored

To say this is not to deny that there are exceptional individuals, that individual works are always to some extent unique, that there are historical shifts that must be carefully attended to, or that there are contradictions and ambiguities within any discourse/world situation, contradictions that imply, as Asad notes (20 18), the potential for self-criticism However, it is crucial to keep in mind that there are no easy solutions to the problems raised by such disciplinary critiques Contrary to what naive attacks on Middle East Studies or enthusiastic (pro and con) misreadings of Said have suggested, Said (169 322) rightly argues that "the methodological failures of Orientalism cannot be accounted for either by saying that the *real* Orient is different from Orientalist portraits of it, or by saying that since Orientalists are Westerners for the most part, they cannot be expected to have an inner sense of what the Orient is all about" Such claims, which apply equally to anthropology, ignore the way that the "Middle East" (or any other ethnographic area) is always a construct, both political and scholarly, and assume that knowledge of it could somehow be separated from power and position and made something pure—two presumptions Said refuses to make and takes great pains to refute (169.10) It follows then that the truth-claims made by even an indigenous anthropologist who lives in and identifies with the society he or she writes about would have to be subjected to the same sorts of questions (See 4, 13, 15, 78, 144, and even 55, 113, 146 on research by insiders) The most important point Said makes is that the kinds of representations of the Orient

that Orientalism has purveyed have not been merely misunderstandings but, rather, a necessary aspect of the establishment and maintenance of a certain power relation. I will return to these questions of what could be called "the politics of place" when I examine anthropological theorizing about the Arab world. Before that, I want to take up the work of those anthropologists whose theorizing seems less localized.

Analyzing Human Action. Culture, Ideology, and Discourse

In 1975, the parochialism of Middle East anthropology was such that it could still be said in the last major review of the field to appear in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* that "anthropological studies in MENA (Middle East and North Africa) have largely failed to attract an audience of scholars beyond those devoted to undertaking such studies themselves" and that "with few exceptions, contributions to anthropological literature based on Middle Eastern research have failed to have an important impact upon theoretical concerns in the field of ethnology" (81-183). This is no longer the case. Middle East anthropology can now claim two highly influential anthropological theorists, Clifford Geertz and Pierre Bourdieu, as well as some of the key figures (Vincent Crapanzano, Paul Rabinow, and Kevin Dwyer) in what some refer to as "reflexive anthropology." At least a brief discussion of their work is essential, what follows, although brief, should be enough to reveal the thrust of the recent anthropological theory that has emerged from work in the Arab world. This is a different matter from anthropology's contribution to theory *about* the Arab world, which will be examined in the second half of this essay.

It seems to have become fashionable to criticize and even dismiss Geertz for what amounts to the sin of writing well. He is accused, often with a peculiar animus, of wielding his magical pen to conjure phantoms capable of taking in his poor unsuspecting readers. These strange charges must be taken as a tribute to his stature. There are criticisms to be made of Geertz's approach, but they must begin with a recognition of the nature of his theoretical contribution. He shares with Bourdieu two central concerns: the relationship between social actors and the ideas they work with and the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in modes of social analysis. Drawing on and thus reacting against different intellectual traditions, however, they have ended up representing different theoretical turns in anthropology.

Although Geertz's work covers a wide range of topics, is distributed throughout a large number of books and essays written over a long period, and is based ethnographically on fieldwork in Indonesia (Java and Bali) as well as Morocco (and is often explicitly comparative), I pick out only a few of its most influential general aspects. He reintroduced into an anthropology influenced by either Emile Durkheim or Franz Boas a Weberian concern with

“meaning” or “culture” and thus interpretation. This links him immediately to literary criticism, and he has indeed played richly with the metaphor of cultures as texts to be read (e.g. 88). What anthropologists should do is to interpret people’s actions, even the most minute, in terms of systems of publically shared symbols and to seek to understand how these symbols shape people’s understandings and feelings. His article on the Moroccan “bazaar” as a cultural system is his most recent and extended analysis of a Middle Eastern society in these terms (90).

Geertz’s arguments have influenced the direction American anthropology has taken over the last two decades. Mediating the debate between the behaviorists and idealists by arguing for a view of humans as essentially cultural and their actions always meaningful or symbolic, he balanced the British anthropological concern with social structure (which had dominated Middle East anthropology) with a stress on cultural analysis and interpretation. His notion of cultures as texts and his recognition of the textual nature of ethnography [“writing fictions” (89-15)] laid the groundwork for what has now become a major issue in anthropology, the relationship between fieldwork and the writing of ethnographies (see also 91).

This raises the question of method. According to Geertz what is to be read is social action. Because it is important to get at what Malinowski (124) called “the native’s point of view,” the anthropologist must try to figure out what peoples’ actions mean—to themselves and to others. To designate this process he borrows the notion of “thick description” from the philosopher Gilbert Ryle and, with the help of a story told to him in 1968 about an altercation in 1912 among Berber tribesmen, French colonial officials, and a Jewish shopkeeper in the mountains of Morocco, argues that ethnography consists in interpreting peoples’ actions in terms of the interpretations with which they themselves work—in this particular case, misinterpretations due to “a confusion of tongues.”

The Moroccan tale illustrates immediately some of the troubling questions raised by Geertz’s approach. First there is the ambiguity about who is doing the reading and the uncertainty about how meanings for various individuals or groups are to be inferred. Thus the text he provides could be read at one level as a tale told to a visiting American anthropologist about how arbitrary and terrible the French were when they came to the area. Second there is a problem about whether this story is about misunderstandings or rather the political process of colonial domination, of which deliberately creating “misunderstandings” may be a crucial part. For at another level the story can be read not as one about human misunderstandings created when different “frames of interpretation” are brought together (admittedly, as Geertz notes, by the colonial presence), but about the tragic results for one poor Moroccan Jew of the French officials’ imposition of control, at a particular historical

moment. over the local population using confiscation and imprisonment as part of their technique

Bourdieu, the other major theorist with ethnographic experience in the Middle East (among the Kabyles in Algeria), has theorized more explicitly both the relationship between the anthropologist's and insider's understandings of situations and the ways that "misunderstandings" might be vital to the way power operates in social life. Although his own approach has weaknesses that will be discussed, it can profitably be used to highlight the assumptions and lacunae in the Geertzian approach.

Bourdieu begins by arguing that "the anthropologist's particular relation to the object of his study contains the makings of a theoretical distortion." This distortion is due, he says, to the anthropologist's very position—however "direct" his or her experience—as an observer, one who is "excluded from the real play of social activities by the fact that he has no place in the system observed and has no need to make a place for himself there." This exclusion "inclines him to a hermeneutic representation of practices, leading him to reduce all social relations to communicative relations."

Condemned to adopt unwittingly for his own use the representation of action which is forced on agents or groups when they lack practical mastery of a highly valued competence and have to provide themselves with an explicit and at least semi-formalized substitute for it, [the anthropologist] in his preoccupation with *interpreting* practices, is inclined to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object (33 1-2)

Bourdieu thus argues that the unwary "outsider" anthropologist mistakes practical activity for a drama played out before a spectator, an object to be observed, a representation to be interpreted or read. Although primarily directed to the structuralists, whose formative influence is reflected in Bourdieu's own work (and although neglecting to consider, incidentally, the particular implications of the outsider being a Frenchman in French-occupied Algeria), this critique could well be used to question Geertz's hermeneutic approach, his view of "culture" as text or model, and his assumption that social action has to do primarily with meaning.

If Bourdieu would question "reading" as the proper mode by which anthropologists should analyze social action, he would be equally suspicious of the Geertzian notion that the people we study are themselves reading one another. He considers "practice" the central object of study, and his notion of human actors is that they are primarily engaged in regulated improvisations in the art of living. In answer to the question of why individuals in particular communities seem to act similarly, he prefers a concept called "habitus" to "culture." By habitus he means dispositions that generate and structure practices and representations but are themselves structured by such things as

material conditions characteristic of a class condition (33.72, 78) Unlike Geertz, he is especially concerned with those political and historical forces that create a particular *habitus*, which in turn generates what the anthropologist perceives as cultural regularities

For method Bourdieu proposes a dialectical movement between, and in a sense beyond, a phenomenological and an objectivist approach By "phenomenological" he means the experience people themselves have of their world By "objectivist" he means the outsider's knowledge of the structures of the social world that shape this experience and of the nature of this primary experience as that which is "denied *explicit* knowledge of those structures" (33:3) He is especially interested in the understandings the actors themselves are denied—the role of "misrecognition" or misrepresentation of the meaning of actions in enabling domination to occur

In what has been described thus far, and more evident in his brilliant and detailed ethnography of Kabyle society, Bourdieu's affinities with Marx rather than Weber are clear If Geertz can be faulted for seeming to view "culture" as overly unified and timeless and for passing too lightly over questions about the social, economic, historical determinations of culture and its role in power relations, Bourdieu must be confronted with ambiguities inherent in the Marxian concept of ideology as a mystifying tool of power Implicit in this concept is a belief in the possibility of stepping outside the structures to know the "truths" that ideology masks (for example, the misrecognized strategies of domination), and an assumption that at bottom, as Bourdieu suggests in his analysis of "symbolic capital," these truths are economic (e.g. 33 183)

As anthropologists have pursued analyses of sociocultural life made possible by their initial insights, some of the limitations of both Geertz's and Bourdieu's theoretical approaches are becoming more apparent One type of phenomenon that resists analysis in terms either of a theory of culture or a theory of ideology is the coexistence of contradictory discourses, especially when one seems to subvert the other I found this not in a place like colonial Morocco but within a relatively homogenous group where the contradictory discourses were linked to different groups defined by gender or age and even characterized the same individual speaking in different contexts (4) Second, like most anthropologists, both Geertz and Bourdieu have been unable to find satisfactory ways of dealing with historical transformation Other issues with which they grapple—such as how to mediate the dualities of ideal versus material, subjective versus objective, representations versus practices, knowledge versus power—are far from resolved

Among those whose work addresses itself to dilemmas posed by these approaches is Michel Foucault, whose notions of discourses and discursive formations, always historically situated, always tied to and produced by

power (whether from the center or the margins), provides us with a provocative and interesting way of thinking about issues of social actors and their ideas (See 86 for a critique of the notion of ideology, 84 for an early formulation of discourse, and 85, 86 on power and discourse) Although anthropologists are only beginning to explore theoretical pathways Foucault opens up, this is a direction that could (as *Orientalism* demonstrates) be fruitful Finally, one must ask what the consequences, if not determinations, are of social theorizing that concentrates on the internal dynamics of cultures treated as ahistorical social wholes detached from their global contexts—theorizing that does not seriously question the global and historical conditions of its own presence

Fieldwork and Ethnographic Writing

Epistemological concerns like those raised by Geertz and Bourdieu have come to the fore in theorizing within anthropology over the past decade Some associate this scrutiny with a despair over the fragmentation of anthropology as a discipline Others associate it with an exhilaration born of the disintegration of positivistic paradigms (47, 127) Three anthropologists who worked in Morocco in the late 1960s and early 1970s—Rabinow, Crapanzano, and K. Dwyer—have been central figures in this discussion, which involves a questioning both of the fieldwork encounter and of the relationship between the encounter and the production of ethnographic texts

All three are concerned about the tendency to ignore the process by which knowledge about the Other (as they refer to their objects of study) is gained, hence the disengagement of the activity of fieldwork from its result in the written text In his early work (work that he might now renounce), Rabinow (156), like Geertz, argued that anthropology was an interpretive enterprise and extended this hermeneutical approach to the actual situation of fieldwork With Bourdieu, however, he asserted that anthropological "facts" were a hybrid product of the encounter between the anthropologist and the persons being studied, and must not be confused with the lived experience of the latter In the process of being questioned by the anthropologist, "the informant must first learn to explicate his own culture to begin to objectify his own life-world" (p. 152) Both are active in developing "a system of shared symbols" (p. 153) In other words, Rabinow saw fieldwork primarily as a (halting and imperfect) process of communication and the creation of inter-subjective meaning

His essay is a mix of theoretical reflection and brief accounts of his attempts to communicate and develop relationships with a number of informants who were, as he puts it, his guides to various zones of Moroccan culture by virtue of their own differing social locations within Moroccan

society (156-156) He orders the informants by their increasing "otherness," proceeding from the French-speaking hotel owner to the orthodox paragon of a saintly lineage This progression serves as the narrative drama of the book whose climax is his final confrontation with utter "otherness," a confrontation that makes him decide it is time to go home, hardly a year after he has begun fieldwork

Crapanzano and Dwyer, too, are disturbed by the anthropological conventions of transmuting negotiated realities to objective ones attributed to the Other (53 *x*), but their accounts take more seriously than Rabinow's the consequent need to reveal the nature of actual encounters Where Rabinow confesses that he sometimes "collapsed" individuals to make composites, Crapanzano (53) and Dwyer (64) structure their books in an experimental fashion around their relationship with a single individual, interspersing interview material with commentary and theoretical reflection

Crapanzano's book is a complex, evocative and highly self-conscious reflection, often within a psychoanalytic idiom, on what transpired within the space of his encounter (p. *xiii*) with Tuhami, an unusual and troubled Moroccan tile-maker married to Aisha Qandisha, a she-demon As Tuhami's interlocutor he "became an active participant in his life history" (p. 11), eventually succumbing to the temptation to take on the role of therapist Crapanzano recognizes in this transformation of their relationship the reproduction of the familiar power dynamics of the colonial relationship, just as he recognizes in his role as writer and interpreter of the encounter a privileged position of final authority Yet his central concern remains the dynamics of the interpersonal relationship

Dwyer's more dedicated effort to expose what is hidden in what he calls the contemplative stance of anthropology adds a twist to Bourdieu's argument about the projection of the experience of the outsider onto the workings of the social worlds being studied Dwyer reminds us that anthropologists do not really stand outside the societies they study, they stand in a definite historical and social relation to those societies They come from dominant societies and they intrude just as colonials did before them (64-274) The Self and Other are not isolated from each other, nor is their encounter isolated from the world-historical conditions that shape it (64-270)

His book attempts to reformulate anthropology's project in line with a desire to let "the Other's voice be heard addressing and challenging the self" (64-*xxii*) Like Crapanzano, he focuses on the human encounter between anthropologist and informant, in his case one Moroccan villager with whom he tape-recorded a series of interviews (what he calls dialogues) about a number of events (broadly defined) over the course of one summer Unlike Crapanzano, he chooses actually to reproduce the "dialogues" he had with this man, including all the questions the Moroccan was responding to He preserves the sequence to make clear both his own role in the interactions and the

incomplete, contingent, and always changing quality of the exchanges out of which anthropologists develop their knowledge of other societies

Laudable in these works is the attempt to expose the complex character of the stuff out of which anthropological "facts" are made by showing the peculiarities and incompleteness of the personal encounters out of which knowledge comes. By exposing their own contributions to the encounters, Dwyer and Crapanzano also make themselves vulnerable in ways unusual for social scientists, a goal Dwyer explicitly embraced. Crapanzano tells us that in addition to feeling ambivalence about the encounter with Tuhami and to structuring and limiting it, he fundamentally betrayed the relationship by suddenly abandoning Tuhami (which would have been an unpardonable mode of termination for a therapist). Dwyer allows us to see the intrusive nature of his questions and the way in which the dialogues were initiated by him and occasionally annoyed his informant.

Yet it is as if this personal self-exposure obviates the need for critical analysis of the self in the encounter, and thus some of the most important questions—about the politics of the anthropological encounter—are side-stepped. Ironically, these theorists who deplore the false distance of objectivity risk setting up the divide between self and other as more fundamental, fixed, and absolute. In all three works, one senses a distance at the core of the encounter. This is conveyed by the very abstractness of the designation "Other," by the revelation of a lack of mutuality in the relationships themselves, or by the refusal to fill in the context in such a way as to make an informant's comments seem sensible and ordinary. Crapanzano writes about a man who is a seriously maladjusted, unusually isolated, and miserable person in his own society. Although his life history brings certain cultural issues into relief, it may also inadvertently highlight the "otherness" of Moroccans. Dwyer's villager is more ordinary, but we know him only as the sometimes impatient answerer of Dwyer's questions. In labelling as a dialogue what is actually a series of questions and answers, Dwyer implicitly denies the possibilities of a real conversation. In stripping his villager of the context of his community, Dwyer makes it seem as if the two of them stand opposite each other as Western-style isolated individuals in a social void.

Rather than fetishizing the impossibility of empathy through this reification of the Self/Other distinction, one is tempted to go beyond this critique of the positivistic assumptions and conventions of anthropology by asking, too, how the Western self might be shored up and given an identity by such oppositions. To recognize that the self may not be so unitary and that the other might actually consist of many *others* who may not be so "other" after all is to raise the theoretically interesting problem of how to build in ways of accepting or describing differences without denying similarities or turning these various differences into a single, frozen Difference [a point Appadurai (19) also makes about the anthropological construction of "natives"]

Geopolitics is one of the most crucial factors both dividing and uniting Western anthropologists and the people they study. All three of the reflexive anthropologists whose language for self and other tends toward the existential or literary also remark that they are historical and social selves. But, like Geertz and Bourdieu, they hardly elaborate. For example, Dwyer, like Rabinow, refers to the colonial situation and to the French in setting the terms of his encounter with a Moroccan, neither refers much to the contemporary relations between Morocco (as an Arab country) and the United States, or considers how their relationships, as Americans, with Moroccans might have been colored (on both sides) by the polarization made vivid by the June 1967 war or the general inequality between the two societies. There are other aspects of these anthropologists' selves that could have received more attention: gender, ethnicity, and disciplinary constraint [although Crapanzano (52) does talk about some of the ways this disciplinary anthropological self affects the process of writing ethnography]. All are elements that make up their selves and interact in perhaps conflicting ways with aspects of "others" they encounter.

THE POLITICS OF PLACE IN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

If it can no longer be said that there are no theorists in Middle East anthropology whose work is read outside the field, even if this theorizing is limited to a certain set of questions and slanted away from history and global politics, it is still true that most theorizing in the anthropology of the Arab world concerns more localized problems. The second half of this review covers anthropological work specifically devoted to making sense of the Arab world. Because of the reliance on the "direct experience" of fieldwork (however problematized by the reflexive anthropologists), anthropological work may seem less citational than Orientalism, less liable to conjure up a "real place" out of textual references. I want to argue, however, that anthropological writing shapes a Middle East of its own, fashioned out of conventions, standards of relevance, imaginative and political concerns, and zones of prestige.

I take as a starting point Appadurai's (18) argument, made in response to Ortner's (151) major review of anthropological theory. He asks about the relationship between scholarship (in this case anthropological theorizing) and place (which he calls the "purloined letter of anthropology"). His thesis is that "what anthropologists find, in this or that place, far from being independent data for the construction and verification of theory, is in fact a very complicated compound of local realities and the contingencies of metropolitan theory" (18:360). One could call this the politics of place in anthropological

theorizing, and it is with the politics of theorizing about the Arab world that I am especially concerned. I concentrate on Anglo-American work. Separate treatment is required for the political issues raised by the subjects and silences of either the French corpus or the Israeli or Israel-based anthropological work on Arabs (see 22, 74, 117, 142).

The anthropology of the Orient is a special blend that cannot be reduced to Orientalism or understood without reference to the context of general anthropological preferences, whose imprint can be seen clearly in its contours. As Appadurai notes, there are prestige zones of anthropological theorizing, mostly determined by anthropology's tendency (until recently) to concentrate on "the small, the simple, the elementary, the face-to-face" other and to avoid the complex, literate, and historically deep (18.357). These tendencies are reproduced in Middle East anthropology in a number of ways, one of the most obvious of which is through geography.

Geographically, the prestige zones are Morocco and now North Yemen. These two countries have more in common than scenic mountains and governments friendly to American visitors and researchers. Exotic, colorful, on the peripheries of the Arab world (Geertz calls Morocco a "wild west sort of place"), they are ideal sites for anthropologists. At least they are as ideal as anywhere could be in a region as miserably deficient in myth and "pagan" ritual and as abundant in clothing and historical complexity as the Middle East. These two countries also share the virtues of being away from the central war zones and the political minefield of the conflict over Palestine.

This is not to say that anthropologists do not study other places in the Arab world. But as a rule, and especially lately, peripheries seem preferable to cores and sparsely populated deserts and mountains seem preferable to densely populated and well-watered regions that are centers of power. One can see the foci of work in Middle East anthropology in part as the result of the interaction of the particularities of the Middle East situation with the general romanticism of anthropology and its uneasy sense that since most of its analytical tools were honed in simple societies they are unwieldy if not useless in different sorts of contexts. Gilsenan's wry observation that the dilemma he faced beginning fieldwork in Cairo in the 1960s was whether "there was a space *small* enough for my anthropological fieldwork" (99) is telling.

Appadurai's most insightful remark is that especially in its studies of complex civilizations anthropology tends to develop "theoretical metonyms" or "gatekeeping concepts" — concepts, that is, that seem to limit anthropological theorizing about the place in question, and that define the quintessential and dominant questions of interest in the region" (18.357). As someone who works on India, he is particularly disturbed by the predominance of theorizing about caste as the "surrogate" for Indian society (18, 19).

Is the same true of the Middle East? I think so. It seems to me that there are three central zones of theorizing within Middle East anthropology: segmentation, the harem, and Islam. To switch metaphors, these are the dominant "theoretical metonyms" by means of which this vast and complex area is grasped. I examine below how most anthropological theorizing about the Arab world is oriented to these limited topics, which resonate with (but cannot be reduced to) Orientalist themes. Had this review not been restricted to studies of the Arab Middle East, the themes might have been different. Anthropological work in Iran and Turkey has been more agrarian- and urban-centered and more concerned with stratification, although its own zones might include "despotism."

How does it come to be that theorizing appears more or less restricted to these zones? Although the answers are various (see below), some general points can be made. The first is that paradigms popular within a discipline or a branch of a discipline always perpetuate discourse in certain veins. The second is that the exigencies of academic politics and careers must also play a part in restricting zones of theorizing in any field. Rabinow's (157) reminder about the importance of academic politics in the production of texts is a crucial and underexplored point. No doubt the standards (albeit changing and disputed) of anthropological competence against which work is judged contribute to shaping what is produced. All of us work in national intellectual milieus that shape how and what we work on. Also, unless one speaks to issues that concern others in the field, one is likely to be ignored and one's work to float ghost-like, seen but unseen, popping up suddenly in a lone reference only to disappear again. Finally, it cannot be denied that one way to make a name for oneself is to say something new about an old debate, preferably in argument with a famous elder, dead or alive. But these are only the most general and superficial of the determinations of these zones. In what follows I explore others.

Homo Segmentarius

Perhaps the most prestigious and enduring zone of anthropological theorizing about the Arab world is what is known as segmentation, segmentary lineage theory, or tribalism. The literature is vast, the genealogy long [some begin with Robertson Smith (159) in 1885], the pedigree impeccable [a mostly British line with Evans-Pritchard (75, 76) prominent], and the theoretical distinctions fine. Tribal sociopolitical organization or ideology has indeed been a field where some of the best minds in Middle East anthropology were exercised, whether in working out the meaning and significance of segmentation or, more recently, in denying it. Before considering why this issue takes up an inordinate amount of anthropological space, I outline briefly the points of debate within this arena of social theorizing.

Among anthropologists who see segmentation as something central to understanding Middle Eastern society, the main cleavage is between those who see it as a description of the sociopolitical organization of tribal groups and those who see it as an ideology, variously defined and attributed. Most early works fall into the former category (48, 94, 101). The kinds of institutions examined in this structural-functional approach are those thought to bind and divide men—the land, resources, and patrimony that unite and the feuds that divide, as well as the mediators (in North Africa the saintly lineages) who prevent total violence. The central problem for these theorists is how social order is maintained in acephalous societies like the tribal societies of the Middle East. The answer has to do with the segmentary lineage which balances opposed groups at varying levels of sociopolitical organization. The result, according to the conventional wisdom, is a system of “ordered anarchy.”

The trend in recent ethnography has been to see segmentation, the segmenting genealogy, or the paradigm of patrilineal kinship as ideological, describing not what groups do or do not do “on the ground” but how they think or talk about themselves and what they do. A number of these theorists seek to demonstrate what other forces impinge on tribesmen to determine their social and political behavior. Behnke, for example, posits ecology as the basic “constraint and incentive” in Cyrenaican Bedouin choice, interacting with the morally charged conceptual kinship system (30, 185). Peters (153, 154), also dealing with Cyrenaican Bedouins, argued strongly that the system might be an ideology, a set of beliefs that the “natives” had about how their system worked, that bore little relation to sociological reality or what actually happened at times of conflict. He argued for a material determination of social groupings based again on some sort of economic/ecological concerns. Lancaster (114, 35, 151) is concerned with how, among the Rwala Bedouins, genealogy is a manipulable means of explaining the present and generating the future. He sees most actions as pragmatically motivated economic and political efforts to balance assets and options. These are, however, “invariably couched in segmentary, genealogical terms.”

Rather than just describe the ideology of segmentation or describe how it works, Meeker also tries to explain why it developed historically. “The question is not whether Near Eastern tribal people actually adhere to genealogical principles in their political behavior,” he writes, “but why they should have conceived of such a bizarrely formal paradigm of political relationships with such disturbing implications” (130, 14). For him “the politically segmenting genealogy is a form of political language” suggesting “a play of relationships around a problem of political violence” (130, 15). Finding segmentary politics relatively absent in the tribes of North Arabia, he argues that it must be understood as a peculiar adaptation to the circumstances of a

pastoral nomadic tradition and a politics tempered by the interests arising from sedentary agriculture (as in North Africa and Yemen). The central and more pervasive Near Eastern problem is the threat of violence posed by the possession of aggressive instruments (mounts and weapons), a problem Meeker regards as the implicit subject of the Rwala poetry he analyzes.

Caton (37-41) is also concerned with segmentation as a form of political rhetoric in tribal societies and explores the implications of the notion that "political rhetoric is a communicative act of *persuasion* which is made in response to conflict in the segmentary social order" (37-40). He is especially concerned with how conflict is mediated in such tribal societies, where order seems so fragile because central authority, by definition, is not only lacking but actively resisted as antithetical to tribesmen's ultimate values of voluntaristic action and political autonomy (40). This leads him to a rich understanding of the role of tribal poetry as political rhetoric essential to dispute and its mediation (41).

This is only a partial list of theoretical elaborations on segmentation as ideology. It does not include, for example, either the interesting and much more historically grounded recent discussions of political discourse in a tribal idiom in the context of modern states like Jordan (118, 119) and Libya (56, 57) or the radically structural interpretation to be presented below. In addition, the structural-functional version of segmentary theory has elicited one other type of response: rejection. This position is represented most clearly by Rosen (166, 167) and H. Geertz (93), whose reaction against the vision of Moroccan society as segmentary corresponds to a theoretical rejection of the premises and emphases of the social structural approach in anthropological theorizing in favor of a cultural or interpretive approach.

Arguing that "the literature on kinship and family relationships in North Africa and the Middle East has been unnecessarily burdened with a model of opposing descent groups whose internal segments are structured genealogically," Hildred Geertz hopes to show that this model is inadequate. Even if Moroccans occasionally use segmentation as an idiom, "their more fundamental concepts of intergroup and interpersonal relationships are really quite otherwise" (93-377). Rosen has developed most fully this notion of fundamental concepts of social attachment. In the Moroccan case he proposed origin, locality, and relatedness as "the fundamental bases to which individuals can look for possible relationships as they set about constructing a network of personal ties" (166-101).

Both Combs-Schilling (49, 50) and Dresch [60, and in a way even Joseph & Joseph (108)], for different reasons have argued that this debate between the segmentary and dyadic models of Moroccan social relations presents a false dichotomy. Combs-Schilling, somewhat like Salzman (170), argues that both are idioms available to Moroccans in different contexts.

Dresch, in a more theoretical vein, argues that both partake of a falsely mechanical type of social analysis with a misplaced focus on the interactions of solid bodies, either corporate groups or individuals, rather than on structural principles. To understand what he proposes as an alternative that both remains true to the interpretive project of delineating the actors' assumptions and rescues segmentary theory, we must take up his attack on Gellner, who sparked much of the recent discussion of Middle East segmentation.

Before taking up Dresch's attack on Gellner, I shall mention one other sort of argument, besides the interpretivists', leveled against a Gellnerian view of the total fit between segmentary theory and segmentary society. Hammoudi (100)—who, unlike Dresch, accepts Gellner's claim to be Evans-Pritchard's heir—denies the validity of his extreme segmentary model. He shows, mostly through historical evidence, that the very tribes Gellner studied in Morocco do not conform to the model and that the segmentary genealogical principle provides the basis for hierarchy as well as the proverbial equality of tribesmen. Hammoudi argues that Gellner has imposed his simple theory on a complex situation, "brushing aside all history" (including 50 years of colonial administration). This is easy to do, he adds, in situations where the people in the society being studied themselves hold this ideology. But for Hammoudi it is clear that neither the tribesmen's ideology nor the corresponding anthropological theory describes Moroccan realities.

Dresch (60), who disputes Gellner's claim to Evans-Pritchard's legacy, argues that what actually happens in any particular instance is not relevant to the validity of segmentary theory. He accuses theorists of having misread Evans-Pritchard's structuralist message and rendered it a structural-functional theory of corporate groups. Actually, he maintains, it is a theory of segmentation or balanced opposition as a structural principle; this principle has the same sort of exteriority Louis Dumont (62) attributes to the principle of hierarchy (based on the opposition between pure and impure) in Indian (caste) society. "The actor is constituted," Dresch argues, "in accord with the same structural principle as the categories with which he works and the forms of action available to him" (60:319). For Dresch (like Dumont), calling segmentation (like hierarchy) an ideology downgrades it and denies the intimacy of the relation of action to the notion of segmentation (60:318–19).

In Dresch's work, segmentary theory thus reaches its most developed form, and Middle Eastern tribal man becomes *homo segmentarius*. There are two problems with this. In recapitulating through the medium of Middle East segmentary theory the movement within British social anthropology to claim Evans-Pritchard as a home-grown precursor of structuralism, Dresch stops theoretical time in the early 1970s. Structuralism has in the past decade and a half been subjected to a range of quite serious critiques, the most trenchant of which have emerged in France. Even if he prefers not to consider the more

philosophical poststructuralist arguments of Foucault or Derrida, Dresch must at least take into account Bourdieu's critiques of the idealism of structuralism. Specifically relevant are Bourdieu's analysis of the relationship between official representations and practical strategies and even a similar concern in Eickelman with implicit and explicit practical notions (70) and "the political economy of meaning" (68).

Second, one must ask about segmentation the same question Appadurai (17-19) has asked about caste (and particularly the Dumontian structuralist version of caste) Why privilege this aspect of society and say it accounts for the whole? To be fair, Dresch says segmentation is not the only principle at work in tribal society. But he mentions no other. On the contrary, he remarks (60-313) that "segmentation in the Yemeni case has an oddly inclusive power. What is put into the system emerges looking like tribalism." I find more striking the oddly inclusive power of theories of segmentation in the anthropology of the Arab world.

In general, the question that must be raised is: Why has there been so much theorizing about segmentation? Even if one grants that some agricultural societies in the Arab Middle East are tribal, and that therefore the analytical issues are relevant to understanding more than the approximately 1% of the Middle Eastern population who are pastoral nomads or transhumants, the ratio of anthropologists, articles, and books to population remains staggering. If in defense anthropologists want to argue that segmentary opposition is a widespread principle of Arab social life, they will have to show its relevance in nontribal contexts. Such studies have not been done.

That anthropologists are beginning to sense this excess seems apparent from the justificatory statements that now regularly preface discussions of segmentation. For example, Meeker writes:

There are now many Near Eastern anthropologists who believe that the entire question of political segmentation and tribal genealogies should be set aside as an exhausted area of research. So long as segmentary theory is conceived as a problem of describing political alliances, they are no doubt correct. Yet the segmentary theorists in general, and Evans-Pritchard in particular, have touched upon a distinctive feature of Near Eastern tribal societies (130-14).

"Segmentary lineage theory," Dresch reiterates, "has had its day in studies of Middle Eastern tribalism. Nothing satisfactory has replaced it. [A]lthough lineage theory is best discarded, the simpler idea of segmentation which underlay it is less easily dispensed with and remains useful" (60-9). These statements could be read as symptomatic of the increasingly defensive tenacity with which Middle East anthropologists are clinging to this theoretical metonym.

Certainly no one—not even the interpretivists—would deny that tribalism

or segmentation has some relevance for understanding some Middle Eastern societies. But I think we need to stand back from the internal debates about segmentation to ask why it has dominated anthropological discourse on the Middle East. Some of the volume of this work can be dismissed as an artifact of the previously noted anthropological proclivity for working in "simple" societies in remote places. In the Arab world, Yemen and Morocco are such places, and tribal groups, especially pastoral nomads, constitute such "simple" societies. Some of it can be attributed to the emphasis in social anthropology on social and political organization and the concern with formal systems of classification. Yet, other Middle Eastern problems that were both appropriate to social anthropological theorizing and arenas of tremendous concern in the 1950s and 1960s (notably patrilineal parallel cousin marriage), have practically faded from attention in the last decade (but for reviews see 4: 56-58, 145-148, 70: 176-78, 107, 121). The concern with segmentation has been central to political anthropology since the 1940s, and there is little doubt that political anthropological paradigms can be related in a variety of ways to both concerns of colonial administration and liberal paradigms in social science. Segmentation may seem to be the only issue in the anthropology of the Arab world that relates to a classical anthropological debate actually transcending the region, as Dresch so masterfully points out in a later article (61). But any answer to the question of why segmentary theory is a prestige zone in the anthropology of the Arab world in the 1970s and 1980s must also consider the themes or referents of segmentary theory: men, politics, and violence.

I have argued elsewhere that the primacy of the theme of segmentary lineages in the literature on Arab tribal societies is due in part to the association of men with politics in modern Western societies. Without denying the existence of segmentary concerns in Middle Eastern societies, I suggested that 'a felicitous correspondence between the views of Arab tribesmen and those of European men has led each to reinforce particular interests of the other and to slight other aspects of experience and concern' (4: 30).

One important clue to the fact that this is a masculine discourse is the way a variety of thinkers link the concept of honor to segmentary politics. The literature on honor is substantial, for both the Middle East and the northern shore of the Mediterranean, it could easily have formed a separate section of this review (see also 96, 102, 103). But it can be subsumed, at least for the anthropology of the Arab world, under the heading of segmentation because one thing remains constant in the discussions (2: 33, 36-38, 60, 107, 128-130) the interpretation of honor as an attribute or ideal exclusively of men. Women either are not considered at all or are viewed as that which men must protect or defend to maintain their own honor.

Adra (11) and I (4) have both questioned this association of men with

honor I explore, for the Awlad 'Ah Bedouins, how honor is the moral ideal of both men and women and argue that modesty, usually interpreted negatively as shame, is rather the form that honor takes for the weak or socially dependent. In making this argument about the dialectical relationship between honor and modesty in the Bedouin moral system, I show that both men and women are included within a single social system and that any social analysis must therefore be able to account for both men and women and for their relationships. One implication of my analysis is that conventional definitions of politics, as the system of relations among men about external affairs, are too narrow. The politics of personal life and the system of domination in the "domestic" domain of the family and lineage intersect with the segmentary politics of tribal life, they are part of politics.

The second point is that segmentation theory is a discourse on political violence (182). This violence is implicit in works that posit social order as the central problematic, it is explicitly discussed in all those works on tribal life that take up the subjects of raids, feuds, and disputes. It could even be argued that a concern with politics and masculine honor is always to some degree a concern with potential or actual conflict and hence violence. There is scattered evidence, however, that the emphasis on politics (narrowly defined) or the threat of violence may be less pronounced in the societies than in the relevant studies of them. Gilsean (97) shows how Lebanese villagers circumvent in their social action the seemingly rigid rules of violence associated with a concern about honor. My own work (4) in a tribal community uncovers the coexistence of a highly valued discourse of vulnerability and attachment counterposed to the official discourse of honor. Eickelman's (67) emphasis on "closeness" as a fundamental concept of relatedness among Moroccan tribesmen suggests affiliative rather than agonistic concerns.

More interesting to reflect on is the meaning to anthropologists of this political violence said to lie at the heart of segmentary societies. It seems to have two sides, and anthropologists a corresponding ambivalence toward it. On the one hand, in many cultures, including several Western ones, agonistic encounters are emblems of virility. A certain admiration tinges descriptions of the fierce independence attributed to those in segmentary societies, including Middle Eastern tribesmen. These are real men, free from the emasculating authority of the state and polite society. Furthermore, for many writers, these tribesmen represent romantic political ideals of freedom from authority and loyalty to democracy. But as Rosaldo (163-96-97) has argued in an intriguing rumination on the rhetoric of Evans-Pritchard's celebrated study of the Nuer, the anthropologist's grudging admiration of the Nuer's indomitability coincides with his own anthropological project of interrogating and observing within the context of the British colonial political project in the Sudan. Rosaldo suggests that a fascination with the freedom of pastoral nomads is in

part a rhetorical assertion of anthropologists' freedom from the projects of domination in which they participate, directly or indirectly

The other side of political violence is its danger. Modern liberals find problematic the rights of individuals or local groups to bear arms or engage in self-help politics. That those who live without government are barbaric is thought to be apparent from the raiding and feuding that, according to segmentary theory, are central and endemic activities in tribal societies. Do such societies represent to us the nightmare of never-ending violence and counterviolence growing from the agonistic principle of segmentation?

In comparing the Orientalists' descriptions of Middle Eastern despotic rule and the functional anthropologists' descriptions of African tribal rule, Asad (21) has shown that images of the politics of other societies are linked in complex ways to political relations between the societies being studied and those doing the studying. He has also shown the importance of considering the political interests of the observers' societies at particular historical moments. Although one must be extremely careful to distinguish popular and scholarly discourses on tribalism, the current abuses of segmentary theory for the purposes of political analysis are disturbing. In Op-Ed pieces in the *New York Times*, written by academics, tribalism has served as an explanation for Middle East "terrorism" (e.g. 27). In a recent book (155) reviewed gingerly in that same newspaper, the Arabs' alleged failure to modernize, inability to cooperate, despotic rulers, emotionality, mendacity, failure to produce technology or art, and subordination of women are attributed to the legacy of tribalism and the ideology of honor. Insistence on the essential segmentariness of Arab societies seems to facilitate their representation as especially divisive and violent.

A full analysis of the discourse on segmentation would have to place it historically in the context of a changing world political situation. Such an effort, beyond the scope of this review, would have to include some consideration of the timing of interest in Middle East segmentation long after its eclipse in African studies. Although these reflections on masculinity and violence do not constitute a full answer to the question of why segmentary theory is such a prominent part of the anthropological discourse on the Middle East, I hope at least to have suggested how theorizing about one Middle Eastern subject may be caught up in and shaped by an extraordinarily complex confluence of academic, political, and imaginative streams.

Harem Theory

In the past decade or so, theorizing about women, gender, and sexuality has begun to challenge, in both quantity and significance though not in prestige, that on segmentation. Yet this zone of theorizing illustrates the ironic way that scholarship occasionally corresponds to its object. If Arab society is popularly

known for its sharp sexual division of labor and its high degree of sexual segregation related to an extreme distinction between public and private, a look at the anthropological literature suggests that such patterns are not confined to the society being studied. Nearly all the segmentation theorists are men, while nearly all those who theorize about women are women. The former work mostly among pastoralists or in semi-agricultural tribal societies, most of the latter work in agricultural villages, in towns, and in cities. The former have long genealogies, the latter short ones. In the former the theoretical distinctions are fine, in the latter theoretical debate is muted. And if the segmentation theorists are concerned exclusively with politics, narrowly defined to refer only to the public world of men, the scholars working on women begin with (but, as I will argue, successfully move out of) the study of the women's sphere, the harem. I use the word provocatively, both to denote the women's world and women's activities and to connote an older, Orientalist, imaginative world of Middle Eastern women which, I will argue, shapes anthropological discourse by providing a negative foil.

Like theorizing about segmentation, theorizing about women follows disciplinary trends, as Nelson (149) points out in an excellent review. She situates anthropological scholarship about Arab women within the larger historical context of major changes in the relationship between Europe and the Third World (the Middle East in particular)—changes linked to changes in the paradigms of social science. The first two phases she outlines take us from work done up to the 1950s, in which one saw an "awakening" of interest in women, to that done up to the late 1960s, in what she calls "the period of the empirical gaze." During this second period women were increasingly brought into public view through scholarship on Middle Eastern women that stayed well within the positivistic paradigm of structural-functionalism. The literature centered around issues of the changing status, position, and role of women.

The next two periods are roughly those covered in the present review. Divided by Nelson into the period in the early 1970s of the "critical response" and that in the mid-1980s of an emergent "indigenous response," they are in my view more of a piece. Nelson writes of the relationship between theorizing and the historical situation:

The old paradigms did not provide any resonance for the new structure of sentiments that was emerging—neither in the west where, among other challenges, the feminist re-awakening was forcing a reexamination of ideas about gender, female sexuality and women's appropriate social roles, nor in the Middle East where the 1967 defeat was forcing Arab intellectuals to re-think the foundations of their own knowledge about themselves and their society and its relation to the western world (149)

She sees the development during this period of a new anthropological dis-

course on women mostly by women, many of them from the region, critical of standard analytical categories and social scientific paradigms [although Strathern (176) warns against applying the Kuhnian notion of paradigms to social science], critical of Islamic Arab "patriarchy," and critical of previous scholarship on women

Nelson argues persuasively that the three most productive spheres of rethinking and research were the definition and understanding of power, the analysis of patriarchy (defined as "institutionalized forms of male dominance and female subordination"), and women and production. Work in these areas continues to the present, but due in part to the politicization of the issue of women as "a new wind of cultural decolonization blows through the Middle East," a new period and type of theorizing Nelson labels "the indigenous quest" has begun to take form alongside it. The question of indigenizing research is one of "who participates in the construction of knowledge about women in the Middle East and who controls the process" (149), a type of questioning related to the epistemological concerns explored by the reflexive anthropologists

Although Nelson's outline of developments is compelling, I feel less sanguine about the field with regard to its contributions to anthropological theory. Before going on to detail what I see as harem theory's most significant contributions and to outline the theoretical and methodological potential of feminist anthropology, I must express some reservations. Like its Middle Eastern counterparts in some other zones of anthropological theorizing, the anthropology of Middle Eastern women is theoretically underdeveloped relative to anthropology as a whole. More disturbing is its theoretical underdevelopment relative to feminist anthropology, which itself, for reasons explored cogently by Strathern (177), has not kept pace with feminist theory or scholarship in other disciplines.

In reflecting on why this might be so, I considered the wider world into which books enter. Why (if my impression is correct) do we seem to have a larger than usual number of monographs only minimally concerned with contributing to or engaging with anthropological theory? One factor could be the apparently large and insatiable market for books on Middle Eastern women. The market has changed over the past two decades, reflecting changes in the academy. Women's studies has now come into its own as one of the most intellectually exciting areas of scholarship and a growth field in the book industry. Yet there is still a sense, with regard to women in the Middle East, that what people want is a glimpse into a hidden life, "behind the veil." Books that offer this unwittingly partake in a colonial discourse on Oriental women, a discourse whose elements are incisively examined in Alloula's (12) *The Colonial Harem*.

The irony is that nearly every anthropological study of Arab women is

intended, with varying degrees of self-consciousness, to undermine stereotypes of the Middle Eastern woman. This oppositional stance is, I think, a source both of the strengths of the field (to be discussed below) and the weakness of its theoretical development. How many books and articles begin with the same trope that opened my early article (3) on Bedouin women: the grossly misleading conceptions of the harem and of the idle or submissive, veiled Arab women. This rhetorical ploy—conjuring up an imagined or intended audience of those who hold views that are about to be corrected—risks degenerating into the sole *raison d'être* for the study. The danger is that the scholar will take the less theoretically rigorous path of arguing against a vague but unchanging stereotype. This is no way to sharpen one's thoughts, nor is it a way to develop theoretical sophistication. The latter requires debating each other and building on each other's work, a process that need not be adversarial.

This battle against shadow stereotypes has contributed as well to a certain parochialism *vis-à-vis* feminist anthropology. Here our failure to engage with theory is especially disappointing because, unlike many other zones of theorizing that seem to be tied to place, the comparative potential of theorizing about gender is great. Within feminist anthropology there has been a disaffection with the earlier attempts to universalize and to find analytical frameworks [like M. Z. Rosaldo's (160) public/domestic distinction or Ortner's male female culture nature (150), or even the Marxian production/reproduction] that could encompass gender relations and women's experience in all societies. The recognition of the irreducibility of historical and cultural specificities has been the starting point of more recent work (161, 186). The best approach would probably respect and work with the specificities while being informed by research and theorizing about women in other ethnographic areas.

Despite its shortcomings (and I have been especially critical because I am a part of this enterprise), work on Arab women, motivated as it has been by this oppositional stance, has been impressive. There is fine work and theoretical development in at least five areas. First, by taking seriously women and their activities, these anthropologists have indeed transformed our understanding of the harem or women's world. From the work of most anthropologists in the field (but especially 15, 58, 59, 66, 123, 183), the rich and varied character of women's relationships to each other, to their children, and to the men with whom they interact is unmistakable. Also apparent from these ethnographic studies based on fieldwork primarily within the world of women is the varied nature of women's activities. These range from the predictable ones of socializing children and caring for them and for men within the home, to activities that take them outside the home, like visiting and politicking about marriages and the fates of relatives as well as other matters (109), participat-

ing in religious activities, and engaging in a range of productive activities. The importance of community and the sense in which women form part of a network, whether of kin, affines, or neighbors, have been brought out.

A second significant, and related, contribution has been the insistence of these anthropologists—as well as others (3, 63, 148)—that women are actors in their social worlds. This debunking of the myth of their passive subordination is repeated in nearly every account that presents evidence of the ways women strategize, manipulate, gain influence, and resist. Many have also shown how sexual segregation creates a space of greater independence of action in everyday life than women have in less sex-segregated societies.

The third crucial area has been the deconstruction of the harem itself. Proceeding from a focus on the women's world, most ethnographers have been led to recognize the dialectical relationship between the men's and women's worlds and the impossibility of talking about women's lives without talking about men's. The theoretical implications of this are serious, for if women are not really part of a separate sphere, then how can analyses of the men's domains of politics and economics and religion proceed without reference to women?

This development in thinking about the harem and its inhabitants, like the two earlier ones, was facilitated by and contributed to theoretical suspicions about the categories by which society had previously been analyzed. Nelson's (148) ground-breaking "Public and Private Politics" showed how the conventional Western cultural notions of power that previously informed our understandings of politics blinded us to the ways women participate in decision-making and the workings of society. Altorki (14) argued that in societies organized by kinship, marriage arrangement is a political matter, and one in which women have a crucial role. Davis (58) brought to light the interplay of the formal and informal, and the public and private for both females and males. The most important contribution of this theorizing has been the way it has revealed that analytical categories often conceal Western cultural notions.

The best theorizing has been about ideology and power. In her review, Nelson takes most of this work to be a contribution to the analysis of "patriarchy." What interests me about it is the way it problematizes the notion of patriarchy, asking a set of questions necessitated by the extreme situation of Middle Eastern women: How do women experience and maintain sexual segregation? How and why do they seem to cooperate in this system that is patently unequal (even if the work discussed above has shown that it is not as bad as it looks from the outside)? How do they contribute to reproducing the system, and how do they resist or subvert it?

Such questions have produced a body of complex descriptions of ideology about male-female relations in the Arab world. This work makes use of a

range of interpretive devices and takes as its object an imaginative array of discourses and practices, including ordinary talk and action, folktales (63), poetry (4, 111), the order of houses (35), sacred, erotic, and legal texts (168), symbolic elaborations of rituals such as clitoridectomy (31), the zar (32, 147), folk illness (141), visits to saints' tombs (132) or other rituals of spirit possession (51, 122), and most recently, even everyday practices such as weaving and the milling of grain (135, 152)

Even those cultural studies that do not specifically look at male/female relations in terms of power suggest that women dissent in various ways from the official or male collective representation of social reality and human nature. For example, Rosen (165) argues that men and women in Sefrou begin with different assumptions about their own sex and the opposite sex, and Wikan (183, 184) argues that Soham women judge each other in terms different from those in which men judge them, bringing into question the concept of honor. El-Messiri (72) shows how traditional urban women in Cairo have self-images unlike images of them held by those in other classes.

Arguments like Messick's (135) about the "subordinate discourse" of North African women's weaving bring out the importance of looking at power, however. Although he argues that weaving in precolonial North Africa embodied a vision of the role of women and their relations to men alternative to that presented in the legal and sacred texts and the official ideology corresponding to it, he recognizes the subordinate and fragile character of this alternative ideology. The subordination of the weaving discourse is related to the social and political subordination of the group that practices it: lower-class nonliterate women. He goes on, in an historical move rare in Middle East anthropology, to show how the discourse dissolved with the progressive incorporation of domestic weaving into capitalist production.

Practices like veiling and seclusion and the moral ideology in which they participate, specifically the discourse on sexual modesty, have provided the most fruitful area for theorizing about the relationship between ideology and power relations. Varying weights are given to Islam as an ideological system providing concepts that influence women's experience of subordination, an issue brilliantly considered by Kandiyoti (112). Using a variety of arguments, these studies not only reflect the different situations of women within the Arab world (whether distinguished by class, mode of livelihood, or location in town or country) but also treat important theoretical differences.

D. Dwyer's work addresses debates within feminist anthropology about the universality of sexual systems of inequality and argues strongly for "the role of belief in sexual politics" (63-179). She analyzes Moroccan sexual ideology, in the images of male and female conveyed primarily in folktales, to show how it differs from Western ideologies, particularly in its developmental

thrust (men and women change over their lifetimes in opposite directions), and what implications this has for women's support of a system of sexual inequality. Maher (122) uses the Marxian and Freudian language of repression, catharsis, and false consciousness to account for the surprising (to her, given the tension in marital relationships) absence of antagonism toward men in three women's rituals she witnessed in Morocco.

I have questioned the value of the latter sort of argument in trying to make sense of the apparently contradictory discourses Bedouin women participate in: the discourses of modesty and of love poetry. In analyzing the relationship of these discourses I was led to explore the interpenetration of power and ideology. I argued for the existence of multiple ideologies that structure subjective experiences and that individuals use to assert a variety of claims. I also argued for a theory of ideology and power that respects, in this case, the way Awwad 'Ali women can simultaneously reproduce the structures of domination through their commitment to morality and resist them through, among other things, their poetry (4, 6).

The fifth and final area in which harem theorists have made a contribution has been, as Nelson (149) suggested, methodological. The epistemological and political issues raised by the reflexive theorists discussed above are very much alive in this zone of theorizing. Going beyond the tortured discussions of the impossibility of knowing the Other, however, there has been an attempt to include the voices of the Other. The existence of collections that have sought out Arab women's voices or attempted to let individual women tell their stories is significant (25, 79, 80, 133).

More intriguing perhaps is how, despite problems, there has been a respect for and concern with the messages of both "indigenous" and foreign voices—a respect greater than in any other branch of feminist anthropology. The number of Arab or Arab-American women scholars who write on the topic is high (e.g. 3–11, 13–15, 43, 44, 71, 72, 109, 110, 131, 132, 133, 158). Scholars are beginning to reflect on the meaning of this "indigenization" of scholarship (cf. 15). Anthropologists are increasingly involved in a three-way conversation that includes themselves, the ordinary women they study (generally nonfeminist and not formally educated), and Arab feminists and scholars [El Saadawi (73) and Mernissi (131) being the most influential in the West]. Although one can look enviously at the Melanesianists, who seem to have such an extraordinary development of gender theory (e.g. 178), one wonders how this is related to the muted anticolonial discourse in the region, the absence of natives' voices interrupting, questioning, challenging, and subverting the anthropological enterprise so dependent on the us/them distinction. What is lost there that remains highly visible in harem theory is the issue of the political implications of knowledge and theorizing.

Despite these considerable contributions, here academic scholarship in the

case of Middle East anthropology seems to reproduce a structure of knowledge I have described for the Awlad 'Alī: the asymmetry of men's and women's knowledge about each other's worlds (3). Women know more about the men's world and its activities than the reverse. Although I have seen in it a source of community (based on secrets) for women, this asymmetry is ultimately a function of unequal power. Feminist scholars have seen their work not as an appendage to "mainstream" work but as radically undermining its basic assumptions and findings in disciplines from literary criticism to biology. Feminist theorizing about the social world, inside or outside of the Middle East, has shown how analysis that takes account of gender alters the understanding of the social world being described and the way social worlds must be understood. Yet in the anthropology of the Arab world, even more than in anthropology in general, the study of men (represented most clearly in the study of segmentation) is still the unmarked set and the anthropology of women (harem theory) the marked set.

Islam

Islam is the third "theoretical metonym" for the Arab world. Of a different order because it both encompasses the other two—its origins are linked to tribalism and the origin of harems are in turn linked to it—and extends well beyond the geographic confines of the Arab world and the disciplinary confines of anthropology, it deserves a review essay of its own. However, despite the complexity of the issues and the proliferation of texts being produced by the Islamic Studies industry (mostly outside rather than inside anthropology, and not unconnected to perceptions of political urgency), my own discussion of this zone of theorizing will be brief. In part this is because much of the material and many of the issues have been eloquently and recently considered by Asad (24). I only summarize his points, argue with a few, and discuss some new work. Although I conclude by suggesting why anthropological theorizing about Islam seems both more promising than other sorts of theorizing about Islam and potentially contributive to the general development of anthropological theory, it must be remembered, finally, that however sophisticated, the anthropology of Islam cannot be made to stand for the anthropology of the Arab world. Not just because not all Arabs are Muslims, nor all Muslims Arabs, but because not all practices and discourses in Arab societies refer or relate to an Islamic tradition.

Asad begins by asking what various theorists have taken to be the object of investigation in the anthropology of Islam. Three answers have been given: "(1) that in the final analysis there is no such theoretical object as Islam, (2) that Islam is the anthropologist's label for a heterogeneous collection of items, each of which has been designated Islamic by informants, [and] (3) that Islam is a distinctive historical totality which organizes various aspects of social

life" (24 1) Dismissing the first two in a couple of paragraphs, he goes on, in characteristic fashion, to do a devastatingly critical close reading of an example of the third type, Gellner's *Muslim Society* (95) From this exercise he seeks "to extract theoretical problems that must be examined by anyone who wishes to write an anthropology of Islam" (24.3)

His main argument against Gellner and others is that there is no such thing as an essential Islamic social structure He builds his argument out of a number of pieces, beginning with the point that equating Islam with the Middle East and defining Muslim history as a mirror image of Christian history is problematic Then he critiques approaches that seek to account for diversity by adapting the Orientalists' polarities of orthodox/nonorthodox or Great/Little Traditions in the form of a dualism of puritanical town faith versus saint-worshipping countryside faith, the latter two correlated with two types of social structure, one urban and centralized, the other rural and segmentary

Asad points out that Gellner elaborated these notions with the help of segmentary lineage theory (as described above) and then argued that they covered most of the Middle East and nearly all of Muslim history He then criticizes the forms Gellner uses to represent the social and political structures of classic Muslim society dramatic narratives that mistake tribes for social actors He finally shows the inadequacy of the ways these theorists analyze both society and religion (24 2-14) As an alternative he argues that the object of study must be recognized to be a "discursive tradition," a concept whose meaning he goes on to outline

My quibbles with Asad are not about these basic points but about the way he slights some recent work, most particularly Gilseman's, which he sees as exemplifying the second approach to the anthropology of Islam To fault Gilseman (98) for failing to come to terms with the fact that communities of Muslims believe that other Muslims' beliefs or practices are not Islamic may be fair But to reduce his position to a relativistic acceptance of the idea that Islam is whatever Muslim informants say it is does not do justice to Gilseman's considerable contribution to anthropological theorizing about Islam Gilseman's fundamental respect for the ordinary people through whom he comes to recognize Islam is important in itself, in addition, his linking of these "different and sometimes mutually exclusive apprehensions and practices of Islam" (98 265) to social forces (ranging from colonialism to the emergence of new class divisions) is a breakthrough for anthropology Asad undervalues the creativity involved in the variety of domains to which Gilseman turns in his search for Islam—the Lebanese salon, the colonial city, the passion play, the miracle of peanuts Finally, he does not appreciate Gilseman's sensitivity to issues of reflexivity and method in ethnographic fieldwork and writing, embodied in the personal voice that weaves the thoughts and observations together in his text

Others not cited in Asad's review are also contributing to the anthropological study of Islam in interesting ways. Munson (145) allows us to glimpse how the forces Gilseman outlines have been and are being lived by a number of individuals in one extended family in Morocco. His "oral history of a Moroccan family" vividly brings to light the complex ways that Islam as a discursive tradition is interpreted and deployed in people's lives in a push and pull that involves political, rhetorical, and socioeconomic factors. Fischer (82, 83) breaks with anthropological conventions by systematically looking across national boundaries to analyze the dynamic interactions between religious and political ideologies and their class bases in the Arab and non-Arab Muslim Middle East. El-Guindi's (71) work on modest dress and the veil among the Egyptian women participating in the new Islamic movements blends exploration of ideology with sociopolitical and economic analysis to undercut any simple understandings of Islamic militancy as a "back-to-Islam" problem. Antoun (16) considers the social organization of a tradition through the Friday sermons of a single Muslim preacher in Jordan.

Eickelman's (69) social biography of a "traditional" Moroccan intellectual, "focusing upon the training, career, and moral imagination of a rural *qadi* [judge]" (69-14) opens up to view a world of learning, a discursive tradition, rarely examined by anthropologists. Like the people they have commonly studied, anthropologists have tended to be nonliterate. This means they have neither access to archives and texts that might illuminate what they are seeing nor interest in the complex roles of texts in the communities they study. The advantages of such literacy and concern with literacy for an understanding of Islam are apparent from recent work (134, 136, 137). The danger is that the pull of classical Orientalism with its privileging of textual over ethnographic Islam might shift the balance (10) and drag anthropologists away from studying current practices, meanings, and social contexts.

The theoretical approach that seems to be emerging, as these diverse elements are brought together in ways that make it difficult to treat Islam as either a monolithic system of beliefs or an all-determining structure, might well follow lines set by Bourdieu and Foucault. From Bourdieu (33), one might borrow and explore the notion of "body hexis," which suggests ways individuals come to live as natural, through their very body movements, the basic principles of an "ideology." This could be helpful for thinking about the organization of space in Muslim societies or the meaning of prayer and pilgrimage. Notions like "practice," which focus on action rather than thought and treat individuals as improvisors (constrained by a set of already determined forces) whose acts create the patterned realities the analyst perceives as the result of obeying rules, might allow us to interrelate Muslim traditions and texts and socioeconomic formations in particular societies in the Arab world.

Like Foucault one might lay the stress on discourse. Asad argues, for example, that "if one wants to write an anthropology of Islam one should begin, as Muslims do, from the concept of a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Islam is neither a distinctive social structure nor a heterogeneous collection of beliefs, artifacts, customs, and morals. It is a tradition" (24-14).

Two caveats must be added. First, discourse must be taken to include oral as well as written forms. Sayings, greetings, and invocations of God and the Prophet in everyday life are just as important as founding texts. Second, discourses are always multiple and are deployed for purposes by individuals and social groups under given social conditions at particular historical moments. Islamic discourse is no different, as is particularly obvious in the postcolonial societies of today's Arab world.

Whatever shortcomings Asad has uncovered in the anthropology of Islam, the strengths of the anthropological study of Islam relative to other disciplinary approaches are considerable. Within anthropology, the tendency to explain societies in terms of a single totalizing concept is nearly always countered by attention to cross-cultural differences and to the relevance of a variety of domains, from political economy to gender relations. This tendency is further tempered by the fieldwork encounter, which can introduce anthropologists to a variety of ordinary individuals whose statements and actions are neither internally consistent nor consistent among individuals or social groups. They are certainly not consistent in any straightforward way with learned or scriptural statements. Since the anthropology of religion developed, like most anthropology, in the study of nonliterate societies, there remains a healthy bias toward looking for religion in what people say and do.

If the notion of Islam as a discursive tradition in addition suggests that more attention must be paid to the interplay between these everyday practices and discourses and the religious texts they invoke, the histories of which they are a part, and the political enterprises of which they partake, this is a theoretical enterprise that links Middle East anthropologists to those exploring similar problems with respect to other complex civilizations, including China and India. This zone of theorizing links Middle East anthropologists to others concerned with developing methods and theories appropriate to analyzing the heterogeneous and complex types of situations in which most of the world's people now live.

Perhaps Asad's most significant point, though, and one that resonates with the issues I have been raising generally in this review, is found in his concluding remarks on the positioning of scholars of Islam in relation to the tradition that is their object. Recognizing that "to write about a tradition is to be in a certain narrative relation to it, a relation that will vary according to whether one supports or opposes the tradition, or regards it as morally neutral," he goes on to suggest that contests about how to represent the

tradition "will be determined not only by the powers and knowledges each side deploys, but the collective life they aspire to—or to whose survival they are quite indifferent" (24 17) The positive effect such a sense of community can have on accounts of a tradition is apparent in one sensitive and complex portrait of an Arab Jewish community in Tunisia (181) The direction the anthropology of the Muslim Arab world will take depends in part on how Western anthropologists begin to position themselves in relation to Muslim Arabs

CONCLUSION

My point about the three-zone character of anthropological theorizing in this region is not that it takes up issues insignificant to an understanding of life in Arab societies, just as it is not Appadurai's (17–19) intention to deny the existence of caste in India or to suggest that caste is irrelevant to an understanding of Indian society Nor do I wish to denigrate the quality of the work done in these areas, as should be clear from my discussion of the work, I think much of it is very good What I want to suggest is that these three "theoretical metonyms" do not exhaust the richly complex and often contradictory qualities both of people's lives in the Arab world and of the forces that shape them Throughout I have been concerned with why these three metonyms might have been privileged The remaining question is what they exclude

Someone steeped in Middle East anthropology might ask Well, what else could one talk about? In answer, one might turn first to what else has been done, second, to a comparison with anthropological theorizing about other ethnographic areas, and third, beyond the concerns of classical anthropology I do not want to imply that scattered individuals, more all the time, have not asked different questions of the Arab world or looked into different matters Granted, some approaches are indebted to the literature of Orientalism rather than anthropology, but not all. Examples of different issues taken up are markets (90, 116, 138), cultural pluralism (28), narratives or the verbal arts in a society known for the richness of its play of language and its own appreciation of that richness (4, 37, 38, 41, 65, 130, 174, 175), concepts of the person or emotions (4, 5, 36, 51, 167), medical systems (143), and agrarian life (105, 173)

The relative poverty of theorizing within Arab world anthropology about such subjects of great concern in other ethnographic areas is glaring in at least two cases In a recent review of the anthropology of the emotions (120) references to literature on the Pacific were legion, those to that on the Middle East were few Similarly, in Roseberry's 1988 review of the anthropological literature on political economy (164), the only references to work on the Arab

world were to a few articles on the Sudan. More telling is the way work on the political economy of the Arab world mirrors this absence. In his recent book on agricultural transformation in rural Egypt, practically the only references Hopkins makes to theoretical works by anthropologists are to ones written by Africanists. Economic anthropology has hardly been done in the Middle East (but see 104, 105, 116, 138, 171).

There is little indication that peasants or farmers form a less substantial part of the population or are less important in the Arab world than in many African countries. And anthropologists—who, after all, can do fieldwork in villages—are in a privileged position to comment on a set of questions that have recently begun to interest South and Southeast Asian scholars: the relationship between peasants and the state as lived on the local level, and especially the coexistence of resistance and cooperation. Are there household economies only in Africa? Is there peasant resistance only in Asia? Is there capitalist transformation of rural areas only in Latin America? It is testimony to the dearth of recent work on peasants that practically the only monograph (54) on an Arab peasant group that is in print and popular for classroom use, reviewed in major anthropological journals and carrying a foreword by a noted anthropologist, is a journalistic account (supposedly based on fieldwork) that contains long passages lifted from a prewar classic on the Egyptian peasant (26), reproducing the ahistoricism and colonial stereotypes of that period (140).

By being less parochial in their reading and turning to other dynamic areas within anthropology, Middle East anthropologists may begin to break out of the compelling zones to which they have been drawn. Harem theory has, I think, begun to benefit from its contact with feminist anthropology. But turning to other regions will not provide all the answers. Anthropologists of the Arab world are confronted with the same dilemmas troubling anthropologists of other regions and persuasions. Are the concerns of classical anthropological theory adequate to the world they seek to grasp? What should anthropology become? What should anthropologists study and how should they go about their work? Who should determine their questions, and who is their audience?

Advocating a self-critical reflection on the fieldwork encounter and on the processes of writing ethnographies and theorizing, along with a sharply self-critical analysis of the relations between the societies that study and those that are studied, is a first step. It is not, however, enough to criticize what has gone on before. This, in a sense, is the flaw in Asad's project (with the critical Middle Eastern studies group) of only, if carefully, deconstructing key texts (99). New projects and approaches involving fieldwork or historical research must also be developed. Swedenburg (180), for example, combines attention to the politics of scholarship and a greater awareness of the political in

peoples' lives in his analysis of the relationship between Palestinians' uncertain construction, under military occupation, of a national historical memory and his own position as an American researcher writing about the subject for an American audience

One approach is to pursue the implications of anthropology's Western origins and center. The value of works such as Said's (169) analysis of scholarship on "the Orient" and Alloula's (12) analysis of colonial postcards from Algeria is that they turn back the gaze to which Arabs have been subjected by revealing the patterns and politics of the cultural productions of the West. Anthropologists can do something similar. In addition to critically analyzing, as this review has done, their scholarly productions, they can turn back the gaze on themselves and the society that produced them by letting the worlds they come to know bring their assumptions and analytical categories, not to mention their whole enterprise, into question, something that has always to some extent been part of anthropology's project (127). Rabinow (157) calls this the project of "anthropologizing the West," something Mitchell (139) has done in a systematic way through a study of the colonization of Egypt and that others are also beginning to do (e.g. 152). Such an anthropologizing would include among other things recognizing the ways the Western self and sense of identity continue to be formed through an opposition to the non-Western other, and exploring further the ways anthropological theorizing and its categories are culture bound, historically specific, and politically charged.

Another approach might be to unsettle disciplinary, geographic, and temporal boundaries by focusing on a wider range of issues crucial to everyday life in communities in the Arab world. Some of these issues have been raised by intellectuals from the region, some by the many kinds of ordinary individuals with whom we work in the field. Few of these people have much interest in metropolitan anthropological theory. We would have to go to the cores as well as the peripheries of the Arab world, to cities, towns, and villages connected to each other and to us by transnational cultural forms, global communications, labor migration, and international debt (including the poverty it enforces and the political violence it encourages). Adding some less obviously "anthropological" issues, often pressing ones that people live with, to those on which we work, we might try to consider such things as state violence and repression, class inequalities, consumerism, military occupation, changing politics of gender and sexuality, migration, exile, and work, to name just a few.

To make sense of peoples' lives and the forces that structure them, we will also have to break with the classic anthropological predisposition to ignore the historical and current interactions between this part of the world and others (185). The local, in the Arab world as elsewhere, cannot be understood

without reference to the nonlocal, even if it should not be reduced to it. Transnational flows of culture, capital, political power, and military force have shaped ordinary life in the Arab world for centuries. With the growing importance of Islamic movements, the flows are beginning once again to go in several directions at once (see 6). All this must be traced historically, without, however, stopping at the now comfortably distant colonial period. Taking it into the present is critical, both to analyze process and to be able to consider such phenomena as forms of historical consciousness or inventions of traditions.

History is important in another way. If Orientalist scholarship looked to the past to define the essence of Arab civilization, anthropology's ahistoricism has tended to produce its own brand of essentialism—the essentialism of Arab culture. Bringing the region into historical time, exploring the ways the complex situations in which people live have been historically produced, and showing how transformations have been and are now being lived by particular individuals, families, and communities are steps the anthropology of the Arab world must take. The result will be to make more fluid the boundaries of anthropological discourse on the Arab world.

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